



Yew Killed

A tale of murder in the

INTRODUCTION

One of the most turbulent periods in the history of Scotland and England is that of the Border Reivers. For three centuries the border between these two countries suffered from seemingly unending theft, raiding and murder.

The era of the Border Reivers has been likened to the more famous Wild West of America and both periods produced more than their fair share of ruthless outlaws, callous killers and loveable rogues.

For the three centuries that led by to the end of the 16th century the hill land between the countries of England and Scotland were pillaging ground for raiders. Men of any social class could and did become Reivers. From labourers to noblemen, anyone could take to the sword and become professional thieves, killers and racketeers.

In many ways they were the first recognised British gangsters. A perfect summation of the time is the fact that the Border Reivers gave the words blackmail and bereaved to the English language.

England and Scotland had fought one another almost constantly for generations and this unceasing conflict had in no small part dramatically affected the lives of those who lived in the Borderlands. The marching of hungry armies looking for supplies as well as violent invaders provided the clans and families of the region with a host of problems from robbery to starvation, wounding to death.

The Borderland existence was a hellish one!

Scottish Reivers are known as clans whereas English Reivers are referred to as families. Loyalty to the family or clan was stronger than that to the king. Reivers could be poor men or rich men or any in between. It was not a profession restricted by class or wealth or even skill.

Generations of reiving made the people of the Borderlands into a fiercely effective fighting force of light cavalry experts and lethal guerrilla fighters. The constant fighting that occurred in the period moulded the Reiver into a superb warrior who was accomplished in stealth and horsemanship and an expert with pike, sword and pistol.

In large scale conflicts they performed exceptionally well as skirmishers, harrying the enemy with precision attacks and then disappearing back into the rugged terrain.

The exact nature of the Reiver has often been cloudy, from the image of the villainous brigand to the loveable rogue. For many the fine art of stealing livestock and any other goods was one way in which to survive the trials of the time.

But whether the clans and families that participated in this raiding did so to fatten their coffers or just to survive, it makes the era, from a wargaming perspective, quite tasty. In either case, eventually what once began from necessity would become a way of life, and the Reivers were born.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

The land of the Reivers follows that of the Cheviot

By Tom Hinshelwood

My Sheep

Time of the Border Reivers



Hills, which is the chief geographical feature that acts as a barrier between Scotland and England. The hills are covered in rough grass, with few trees and many grim valleys, dark gullies, marshes and bogs. The bleak landscape could be difficult to negotiate for those who knew it well and positively treacherous for the unwary.

The landscape was an important factor that allowed the Reivers to flourish as it was perfect for exploitation by the guerrilla fighter. A man who knew the hills could use the land to his advantage, knowing which passes provided the best hiding places, which bogs could be traversed and which could not, and most importantly knowing the fastest routes across the border and the safest ways back.



THE RAID

Raids could be large or small affairs, ranging from a fast night attack by a dozen riders to larger warbands of several hundred going out for days at a time to collect huge amounts of plunder. Though raiding was a common activity it was still a highly dangerous business and as many who thrived on it died because of it.

The best time to raid was after the harvest had been gathered and when livestock were at their fattest, so reiving was most profitable and therefore most common between August and February. In addition, because raiding was almost always done at night, in winter the fewer hours of daylight meant that Reivers had more time to conduct their raids and escape in the darkness. But opportunistic or particularly greedy Reivers could raid all year round.

After the raid was the most dangerous time for a Reiver was the journey back home. Only able to move at the pace of the slowest livestock, and weighed down by loot, they would only travel under cover of darkness and only through routes that would provide the best protection from vengeful pursuers. Gullies, ravines and woods were favourite types of terrain to travel through.

The most severe threat Reivers faced was from the lawmakers of the time, the wardens, but a strong household could be just as dangerous. With warning beacons on both sides of the border would be lit, often a simple raid could become an uncertain affair as militias were formed ready to defend against the invaders.

Typically the Reivers would raid across the border into the opposing country, whether the

English raiding in Scotland, or the Scots raiding in England. But this is not to say that reiving was only done against national enemies. The clans and families of the time were often more than happy to conduct raids against their countrymen as well.

The ambition of the Border Reivers could be vast and their raids across the border could extend deep into their enemy's country. Some Scottish Reivers even managed to launch raids as far south into England as Yorkshire.

A REIVER'S ATTIRE

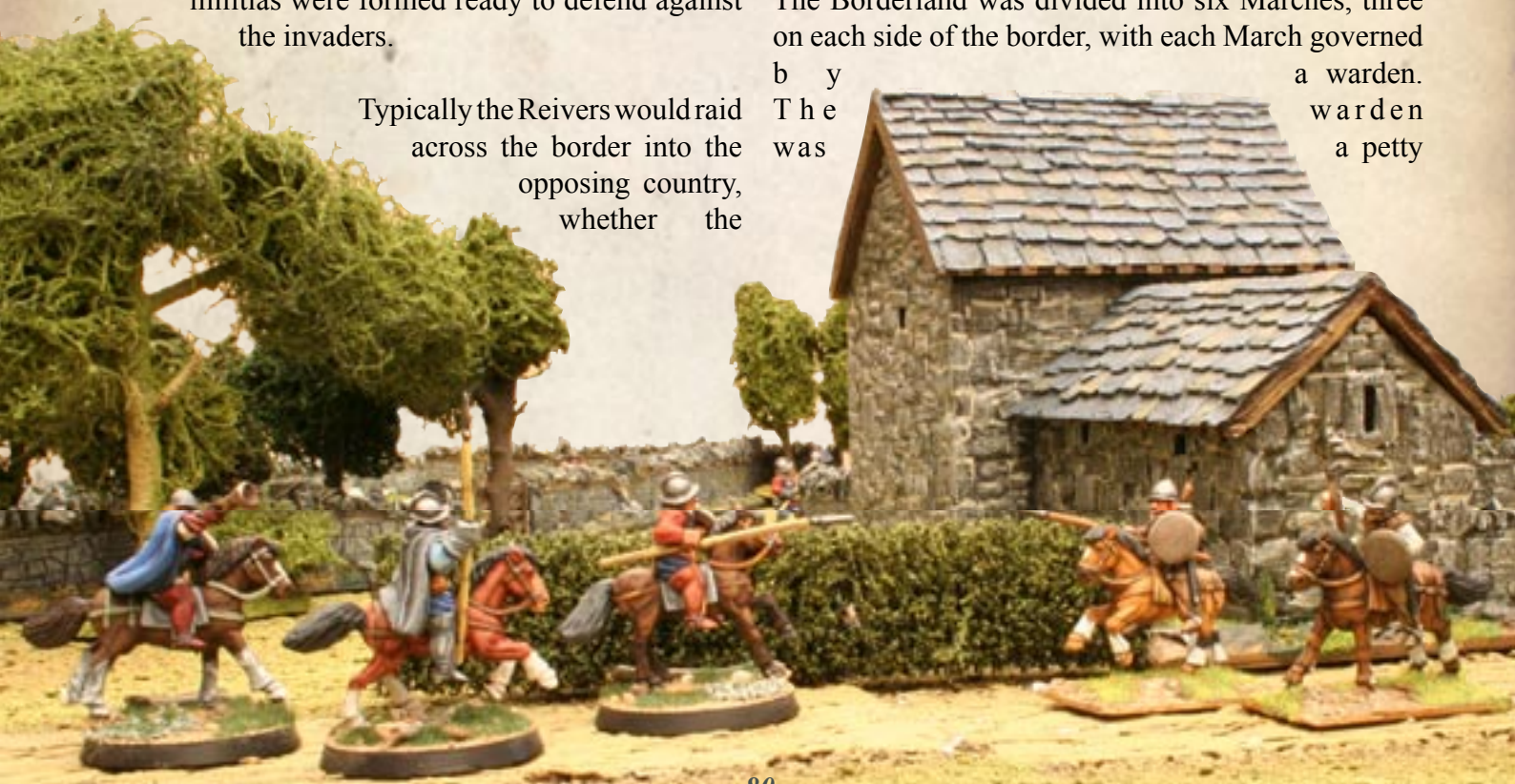
The typical Reiver did not favour the wearing of heavy armour as its weight was too much of a burden. Successful reiving was all about speed, surprise and audacity and rarely necessitated full battle armour. A helmet and front and back plate was about as heavily armoured as a Reiver would get.

For weapons, a wide variety was used, but a spear was the most common weapon with swords used by wealthy raiders and nobles. Other polearms such as halberds and pikes were also favoured. For ranged weaponry the longbow was used, with pistols rare due to their reliability and inaccuracy at range.

Of far more use to a Reiver than armour was his horse. The type of pony used was called a hobbler and was chosen for its stamina and ability to handle the hard and uneven ground of the region.

THE LONG ARM OF THE LAW

The Borderland was divided into six Marches, three on each side of the border, with each March governed by a warden. The warden was a petty



nobleman whose job it was to guard the border against enemy Reivers.

The English drew their wardens from the south of the country so that the wardens had no loyalty to any of the Border families. The Scots favoured utilising the existing clans of the area, appointing the heads of the powerful clans as wardens.

Neither side got the balance exactly right. The English did not pay the wardens enough so that many took to Reiving themselves to supplement the king's coin. Whereas the Scottish wardens were so engrained in the local culture that they were too much a part of the feuds and the Reiving themselves to be effective in controlling the others.

The long arm of the law did its best to put a stop to reiving, but with little real success. Many wardens, who were charged with maintaining the law, were known to dabble in raiding when the opportunity came along. In fact, the best way of protecting your country against enemy reivers was to encourage your own. Fighting men were given gifts of land either for free or for very low rent to make sure the Borderland had plenty of warriors on hand.

TO KILL OR NOT TO KILL

Though the Reiver would kill without hesitation if the need arose, they were not wanton butchers who set out to murder. The stealing of livestock and other goods was seen by both sides as a legitimate act, to be a Reiver was to a certain extent, to be revered.

Murder was still a crime and if a Reiver could simply steal he would do so without the need to wet his blade. In retrospect it seems likely that this could simply be a case of a Reiver not wanting to risk his own life unnecessarily in mortal combat.

The price of committing a murder could be to insight a feud that would last a hundred years or more. To kill a member of a family or clan meant that you would then be a sworn enemy to all the other members of that household until the day you died. As such killing was never done rashly except by the most ruthless and blood thirsty of the Reivers.

Feuds were a typical reason for raiding during the time, and feuds that had existed for many generations were the best reason of all to take up arms against a rival clan or family regardless of its nationality.

THE END OF REIVING

The chaotic time would come to an end when James I of England did his best to unify Scotland and England and imposed tough measures to get rid of the Reivers. Wardens were cast out, the carrying of weapons was against the law, fugitive outlaws were all hunted down or forced to flee.

Families and clans who were famous for their reiving had their lands stripped away and their homes burned down. After three centuries reiving was no longer a viable profession.

OF SHEEP AND VENGEANCE

This scenario is based on a deeply unpleasant historical event which perfectly sums up the era. Under an opaque sky a band of English Reivers from the Charlton family set off in search of plunder. The band did not take the dangerous route across the border and into Scotland, but instead headed west across the hills from Northumberland where they raided the estate of the Grahams.

They proceeded to steal the Graham's sheep and took hundreds of yews back to their own lands. Slowed to the pace of the sheep the Charlton Reivers had a long journey through the hills but managed to avoid any pursuers and arrived without incident.

A good raid it was, but not for long. Just days after celebrating their great work the Charltons were shocked to discover that their recently stolen flock was infected with sheep scab. The disease is caused by a mite that sucks moisture from the skin of the sheep and causes the sheep to rapidly lose weight and eventually die.

But if this wasn't bad news enough, the full horror of the incident was that the Charlton's own flock had become infected with scab from the contact with the stolen sheep. The family was so enraged by this that they immediately gathered arms and rode back across the hills.

They exacted their wrath upon seven unsuspecting members of the Graham family who the Charlton's mercilessly hanged.

SCENARIO BACKGROUND

In this scenario a similar event has taken place deep in the hills north of the border. An English reiving party, led by the vicious nobleman Sir Sydney Cuthbert, had two days previous stolen several dozen sheep from

the lands of the Burns clan. But upon returning to England Cuthbert discovered the sheep had scab and had past it on to his own flock.

A wrathful Cuthbert then led his band of raiders back across the border in a quest for blood. Cuthbert wanted the Burns clan killed to the last man, especially John Burns, whom Cuthbert blamed for leaving the diseased sheep deliberately out for him to take. The fact that the sheep picked up the scab on the journey back to England was a fact that Cuthbert ignored.

The English reivers were looking to attack quickly and without mercy, killing every Burns they could find before riding back to England, hopefully with some plunder too. However, on their way to Scotland they foolishly took the same route as they had the first time, and in doing so have been spotted.

The local Scottish warden, Roy McDouglas, was informed of the English band's direction and seeing a chance to rid the land of Cuthbert and his men, McDouglas quickly set his trap. He had the Burns' moved out of their small estate and taken to a safe location. He then had his own fighters hide throughout the Burns' land, ready to ambush Cuthbert's Reivers when they arrived.

Sir Sydney, his murder lust overriding his usually good reiving sense, did not notice that something was wrong at the Burns' estate. Eager for the element of surprise, Cuthbert had his men dismount out of sight of the Burns' house and they sneaked across the fields that had been full of sheep only two days before.

McDouglas and his men were well hidden both inside the Burns' house but also at key locations across the estate where they waited invisible to Cuthbert's men. John Burns and his eldest son, John Burns Jnr, were with McDouglas' men inside their house. As tough Borderers themselves they were more than keen to help with the fighting.

When Cuthbert's men approached the house, McDouglas sprung his trap...

RULES

For this scenario we've provided you with statistics for both Age of Blood and the Lord of the Rings. Both sets of rules are easily adaptable for most skirmish level games and are equally perfect for playing the Border Reivers. You can download Age of Blood here ([link](#)).

As the Lord of the Rings is a fantasy wargame and Age of Blood is designed for use with Vikings, both games need a few extra rules to reflect the period, most notably in regards to armaments. Below you can find rules for weapons and armour of the genre for both rule sets.

ARMOUR

For simplicities sake armour is categorised in three ways, Light, Medium and Heavy. Light armour consists of non-metallic materials such as leather and padded cloth, and without any head protection.

Medium armour would be either a metal breast and back plate with no helmet, or light armour and a helmet. Heavy armour is a metal breast and back plate and helmet. Shields are no different in LOTR, but in AoB shields are less effective because of their comparatively small size.

Armour	AoB (Fortitude)	LOTR (Defence)
Light		+1
Medium		+2
Heavy		+3
Shield		+1

HALBERDS

Aside from this weapon you can use the standard rules for weaponry, so swords and spears etc behave just as they do in Age of Blood or LOTR. The halberd is a truly deadly weapon that combines the power of an axe, with the reach of a spear.

In AoB the halberd counts as a broad axe but has all the special rules of a spear. In LOTR is counts as a two handed weapon and can be used to support in combat just like a spear.

FIREARMS

Despite taking an inordinate time to reload and having woeful accuracy, firearms were still favoured range weapons because of their sheer lethality. The pistol was perhaps the most common the era but larger aquebuses were used too.

In AoB firearms take a Movement action to reload and in LOTR a model cannot shoot a firearm if it has already moved. In AoB firearms have their own Strength that has no relationship to that of the firer.

	Strength	Range	
		AoB	LOTR
Pistol	5	4" / 8" / 12"	8"
Aquebus	6	6" / 12" / 18"	12"

THE ENGLISH

Sir Sydney Cuthbert
 Lowther o' Shiv
 Bill Potts
 Henry Kerr

THE GAMING TABLE

The scenario is designed to be played on a 6' by 4' board. Towards the north end is the Burns' house and out buildings which is where Cuthbert and his men are heading and where the bulk of McDouglas' fighters are hiding.

The house should be enclosed by a wall, which should extend outwards, forming the edge of where the sheep had previously grazed. In addition there are two copses of trees, in which McDouglas' mounted warriors are hiding.

For the purposes of this scenario we used buildings and walls generously supplied and painted by Dave Bodley from the excellent Grand Manner.

You can find these great buildings and more at www.grandmanner.co.uk

2 x Mounted Reivers
 2 x Reiver with Arquebus
 2 x Reiver with sword and shield
 2 x Reiver with halberd

Sir Sydney Cuthbert views Scotland merely as a way to gather his fortune. A petty nobleman in the lowliest sense, Cuthbert is as ruthless as any Reiver who has lived. His band includes several equally unscrupulous rogues by the names of Lowther o' Shiv, Bill Potts and Henry Kerr.

Lowther is a famous Reiver whose skill with the sword would border on legendary if he were not consistently either drunk or hung over. Bill Potts and Henry Kerr are both veteran Reivers who enjoy killing as much as stealing. Accompanying the heroes are several tough and hardy raiders.

The English force is somewhat out numbered by the



Scots, but man for man the English are the stronger. The English heroes, in particular, are highly lethal, and help to redress the disadvantage in numbers.

John Burns Jnr
Hamish Dunne
William Argyle

ENGLISH DEPLOYMENT

The English are first to deploy and can set up between six and ten inches from the Burns' house. The two mounted Reivers, however, are deployed within four inches of the cottage to the south end of the board. These two were left behind to guard the English horses.

ENGLISH OBJECTIVES

To survive the fight is paramount to Sir Cuthbert and his followers. They are out numbered and out positioned and will need to use skill and cunning if they are to avoid the sword. The English can win in two ways, either by fighting or fleeing.

In this scenario each side gathers victory points for different actions and whoever has gathered the most by the end of the game wins. The English collect victory points for each Scot killed and each English model that reaches the southern end of the board. Models that reach the edge of the board are said to have mounted their horses and escaped across the border.

More victory points are gained from escaping than for killing the enemy, so it makes sense to try and escape with as many warriors as possible. This is even more important when you consider that the Scots will gain more victory points in a simple battle of attrition than the English will. A combination of clever fighting and fleeing will be required to secure victory.

ENGLISH VICTORY POINTS

VP Act

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | For each Scottish Reiver killed |
| 4 | For killing Roy McDouglas |
| 3 | For killing John Burns |
| 2 | For killing each of John Burns Jnr, Hamish Dunne and William Argyle |
| 2 | For each English Reiver who escapes |
| 6 | For Cuthbert escaping |
| 4 | For each of the Lowther o' Shiv, Bill Potts and Henry Kerr escaping |

THE SCOTS

Roy McDouglas
John Burns

- 2 x Mounted Reiver
- 4 x Reiver with aquebus
- 4 x Reiver with sword and shield
- 4 x Reiver with halberd

The leader of the Scots is Roy McDouglas, a big man with a voice like thunder and the manners of a gentleman. He has been a career warden for the last decade and no one north of the border has brought as many Reivers to justice as he.

Deputy Warden's Hamish Dunne and William Argyle are both former Reivers who saw the error of their ways before McDouglas caught up with them. Now both are utterly loyal to the man that showed them the meaning of right and wrong.

Accompanying the warden and his men are John Burns and his eldest son. Having learnt of the plot to kill him and his family the brave John Burns decided to fight alongside McDouglas and his men with the hope of gutting Cuthbert himself.

SCOTTISH DEPLOYMENT

As Cuthbert has no idea of what is about to transpire it is the English who deploy first and the Scots second. McDouglas and his men can be placed anywhere that is out of line of sight of the English.

Mounted models can only be placed inside either of the two copses as there is nowhere else a horse can reasonably be hidden. Warriors on foot can be said to have been deployed inside the house or out buildings, and can emerge from the front or back entrance at the start of the first Movement.

SCOTTISH OBJECTIVES

The ultimate goal of McDouglas is the capture or killing of all of the English Reivers. This is somewhat unlikely but as many brigands put out of their misery as possible is the order of the day. For each English Reiver killed the Scots gain 2 victory points, but for each English Reiver captured they gain 4 victory points, with the heroes worth even more.

AoB: To capture an enemy model you must first declare that this is the intention of the combat before rolling any dice. A warrior attempting to capture an enemy gives his opponent +1 Prowess in hand to

hand combat. If the enemy is then wounded or killed, an opposed Strength vs Agility test is rolled.

If your warrior wins then the enemy model has been captured and can no longer take part in the game, otherwise the capturing attempt fails. Because of the +1 Prowess penalty its worth attempting to capture models only when you have them outnumbered and your warriors gain +1 Prowess themselves to cancel the penalty out.

LOTR: As with AoB you must declare the intent to capture before rolling any dice. The enemy model can re-roll the dice when fighting in order to get a better result, but must abide by the result even if it is worse. If the enemy is subsequently killed a further rolling to wound must be made, and if that is successful the enemy is captured. If not there is no effect.

SCOTTISH VICTORY POINTS

VP	Act
2	For each English Reiver killed
4	For each English Reiver captured
5	For killing Cuthbert
10	For capturing Cuthbert
3	For killing each of Lowther o' Shiv, Bill Potts or Henry Kerr
6	For capturing each of Lowther o' Shiv, Bill Potts or Henry Kerr

So there you have it, a simple tale of murder and sheep. We plan to take a continuing look at the Reivers and hope you'll come back for more tall tales from the Border Lands.



As you can see from this section of our gaming table the terrain can be as complex or as sparse as you want it to be. We used very open ground to the bottom right as this played very little part in the game. The stone walls and farm buildings (all from Grand Manner) acted as the perfect combat zone. We used the Crofter's cottage at the top right more for eye candy, although the fighting did spread to this point during our play testing. In another session we introduced some hedges to the roadside and this proved to be a welcome addition, giving cover to troops and making it tricky for mounted figures to operate.

Scottish Stats for Heroes and Common Men

Roy McDouglas

Agi	Bra	Def	For	Pro	Str	Val
2	6	4	4/8	5	4/6	4
F	S	D	W	A	C	M/W/F
5/4+	4	8	2	2	6	3/0/1

Equipment: Heavy armour, shield, sword and pistol

John Burns

Agi	Bra	Def	For	Pro	Str	Val
2	5	1	4/8	4	4/6	2
F	S	D	W	A	C	M/W/F
4/4+	4	7	2	2	5	1/0/1

Equipment: Heavy armour, shield and sword.

John Burns Jnr

Agi	Bra	Def	For	Pro	Str	Val
2	5	1	4	4	4	1
F	S	D	W	A	C	M/W/F
4/4+	4	7	1	1	5	1/0/0

Equipment: Heavy armour, sword and pistol

Hamish Dunne

Agi	Bra	Def	For	Pro	Str	Val
2	4	1	4	4	4	1
F	S	D	W	A	C	M/W/F
4/4+	4	7	1	1	4	1/0/0

Equipment: Heavy armour, sword and pistol

William Argyle

Agi	Bra	Def	For	Pro	Str	Val
2	5	1	4	5	5	1
F	S	D	W	A	C	M/W/F
4/4+	4	7	1	1	4	1/0/0

Equipment: Heavy armour, sword and pistol

Scottish Mounted Reiver

Agi	Bra	Def	For	Pro	Str	Val
2	3	1	3/7	3	3/4	0
F	S	D	W	A	C	
3	3	7	1	1	3	

Equipment: Heavy armour, shield and spear.

Scottish Reiver

Agi	Bra	Def	For	Pro	Str	Val
2	3	1	3/6	3	3	0
F	S	D	W	A	C	
3/5+	3	6	1	1	3	

Equipment: Heavy armour and either halberd, aquebus, or sword and shield.

English Stats for Heroes and Common Men

Sir Sydney Cuthbert

Agi	Bra	Def	For	Pro	Str	Val
2	5	4	4/7	5	4/6	4
F	S	D	W	A	C	M/W/F
5/4+	4	7	2	2	5	3/0/1

Equipment: Heavy armour, sword and pistol

Lowther o' Shiv

Agi	Bra	Def	For	Pro	Str	Val
2	5	1	3/7	6	3/6	3
F	S	D	W	A	C	M/W/F
6	4	7	2	3	5	2/0/1

Equipment: Heavy armour, shield and sword.

Bill Potts

Agi	Bra	Def	For	Pro	Str	Val
2	5	2	4/6	4	5/9	2
F	S	D	W	A	C	M/W/F
4	5	6	2	2	5	1/0/1

Equipment: Medium armour and halberd.

Henry Kerr

Agi	Bra	Def	For	Pro	Str	Val
2	5	3	4/7	4	4	2
F	S	D	W	A	C	M/W/F
4/4+	4	7	2	2	5	1/0/1

Equipment: Heavy armour and aquebus.

English Mounted Reiver

Agi	Bra	Def	For	Pro	Str	Val
2	3	1	3/6	4	3	0
F	S	D	W	A	C	
4	3	6	1	1	3	

Equipment: Medium armour, shield and spear.

English Reiver

Agi	Bra	Def	For	Pro	Str	Val
2	3	1	3/6	4	3	0
F	S	D	W	A	C	
4/4+	3	6	1	1	3	

Equipment: Heavy armour and either halberd, aquebus, or sword and shield.